

**Believest Thou This?** (John 11:20-26)

**Proposition:** Every follower of the Lord Jesus must believe certain truths about Jesus, before we are ever faced with a Bethany crisis.

- I. **Jesus Recognizes the Troubles of Life** (Vs. 21)
  - A. He Recognizes Despite the Distance (Vs. 21, 3)
  - B. He Recognizes Despite the Delay (Vs. 6)
  - C. He Recognizes Despite the Death (Vs. 11b-15)
- II. **Jesus Reverses the Terms of Life** (Vs. 21-26)
  - A. The Set Terms of Life (Vs. 21, 24)
  - B. The Sovereign Terms of Life (Vs. 25-26)
- III. **Jesus Represents the Triumph of Life** (Vs. 23-24)
  - A. A Present Triumph (Vs. 24)
  - B. A Personal Triumph (Vs. 25)

## Believed Then This (John 11:20-26)

In that hasten of spiritual truth, Lancelotti Jones and the Last Crusade, Jones faced a crisis of belief. In order to force Jones to retrieve the Holy Grail

the evil Nazi leader mortally wounded, Lancelotti's father Henry. The evil shooter said, "The Healing power of the Grail is the only thing that can help him. It's time to ask yourself what do you believe?" Here in the reality of our text Jesus poses a similar question to Martha. "Believed Then This." She had come to a point of life and death desperation, and according to Jesus the only thing that mattered was what she believed. C.S. Lewis said it best "You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you." Just like Martha in John 11, there are going to come those Believing crises, where you are going to be asked "Believed Then This?" Every follower

of the Lord Jesus must believe certain truths.

### Jesus Recognizes the Troubles of Life

In vs 20, Martha comes running up to Jesus and in vs 21 tells him a thing or two. Tom Hays would translate it "Where have you been?" She speaks out of frustration and hurt.



Why weren't you here? Don't you care? Have you ever got in  
**A. He Recognizes despite the Distance** - Mark  
in 21 said... She's right. If Jesus had been  
there, he wouldn't have died. Nobody dies or  
stays dead very long when Jesus is around. Martha  
had a problem w/ Jesus location. Vs 3 when Jesus  
got word, he was in an isolated region called Perea.  
on the other side of Jordan 2 days journey. Martha  
thought because he wasn't right there, he didn't know or care

**B. He Recognizes despite the Delay** - Vs 6  
Upon receiving this news, Jesus didn't  
pack up and catch the first bus to Bethany.  
No, He delayed. Boy he caught grief from  
Martha on this tardiness. She believes  
that Jesus could have done something <sup>ahead</sup>  
all this, it's just that he's behind schedule.  
He's not working on my time table. Sound familiar?

**C. He Recognizes despite the Death** -  
Vs 11b-15. Martha's whole point of contention  
is that Lazarus is dead. It's too late Jesus  
he's already dead. We've passed the point  
of no return, there's no helping us  
now you're too distant, too delayed and  
He's too dead. Jesus knew full well of His coming  
and what Martha is about to find out is what you

**II. Jesus Reverses the Terms of Life** -  
Philosophers down through time have  
taken terms like life and death and tried  
to define them to give some sort of meaning  
behind them. But here in these brief words

1) ...truths about him, before we are ever faced with a Bethany crisis.

2) ...know or care but in vs. 4 Jesus knew full well what was going on. Oh so many times, I've wondered in the middle of my crisis, God where are you, you seem so distant! But despite the seeming distance, He knows what is happening in your trial. He has His finger on the pulse of your trouble even at a distance.

3) ...is what you and I need to carry out of this room is that He may seem be delayed but He is still divine. He may seem aloof but He is still the Almighty. The British preacher of a past generation, F.B. Meyer, in his book on John's gospel, said "He sits as a refiner of silver. He knows our sorrows. He is acquainted with our grief...And when He comes He does more than we asked our thought. He raises not the sick, but the dead."

1) ...by saying the prevailing thought is that, "Life's a PAIN, and then you die." And that is the belief of many in our world today.

In 1971, former Beatle, John Lennon, released a solo album called Imagine, the title track of that album opened with the line: Imagine there's no heaven, It's easy if you try, No hell below us, Above us only sky.

2) The former king of England, known as Edward the Confessor, said just before he passed away, "Weep not, I shall not die; and as I leave the land of the dying I trust to see the blessings of the Lord in the land of the living." Jesus is telling Martha you've got it all backwards. You're in the land of the dying. Lazarus is in the land of the living! When we come to life and death moments in life, what are you going to believe? John Lennon's imagination or Jesus Christ's resurrection!



Jesus takes these terms and reuses them <sup>their head</sup> in <sup>stand</sup> them

## A. The Set Terms of Life - in Vs 21

Martha uncovers a startling viewpoint of life. The air going in and out of Lazarus' body, the blood that was flowing through his veins indicated life. Despite a belief in some future far off resurrection (Vs 24) basically as far as her definition of life was it was all over. Martha's set terms of life are shared w/ many others. "You only live once" they say. I remember a theology professor who tried to sum up the OT by saying

## B. The Sovereign Terms of Life - But

in Vs 25-26, we find Jesus giving the Sovereign terms of life and death. You see Jesus is expressing the truth that life is more than a pulse and a breath, a brain wave and a knee jerk! There is a head to head conflict here. Martha says He's dead. Jesus says he's alive! Lazarus' body may have ceased to function, but he lived on in another place. We that believe on Him may go through the pangs of death, yet we shall live on past the bounds of this mortal coil. The former King

## III. Jesus Represents the Triumph of Our Life

Vs 23-24. Now both Martha and Jesus are discussing the hope that Lazarus had. Martha is saying "he shall". Jesus is



to the future and Jesus is standing triumphant in  
**A. A Present Triumph** - Now let's  
give it to Martha she did have faith  
that Jesus could heal her brother, it's  
just that he wasn't there in time. And Martha  
had a future faith. Yet in the resurrection  
he will rise, but that mattered little in the  
present. She had some theology, she knew  
her Clarence Larkin + Tim La Haye Prophecy  
charts of future events. But had no present  
hope for the nasty news now. Like most of  
us, Christianity will help me in the end. cl. go on  
to heaven. We look at our faith as an IRA or

**B. A Personal Triumph** - vs 24-25  
As Martha looked off in the distance  
in verse 24, Jesus is presenting himself  
as a present solution. Martha had placed  
her hope in something that would happen  
some day. But Jesus is saying your hope  
is not someday it is some one. Martha  
cl. go on the fulfillment of your hopes  
and dreams. cl. am your personal triumph  
You see if you have placed your trust in Jesus  
you are not waiting for something you  
are living for someone. Warren Wiersbe

**II. Closing** - You know the story. Jesus  
will cry and call for Lazarus. I wonder  
if this question pierced the heart of Martha.  
It's a question that we ought to ask ourselves,  
what do you believe about Him.

- 1) ...IRA or a 401K and not a checking account. Jesus is the triumph not only at the consummation of time and eternity. He is the triumph for Monday morning on the way to work! I Am! As one author put it: Martha's faith loved to sing Farther Along, but her faith was flawed because it had not yet learned to sing: Day by day, and with each passing moment, Strength I find to meet my trials here. We can have a daily triumphant life with the ever present Jesus!
  
- 2) Warren Wiersbe says, "When you are sick, you want a doctor and not a medical book or a formula. When you are being sued, you want a lawyer and not a law book. Likewise, when you face your last enemy, death, you want a Savior and not a doctrine written in a book." Marthas personal triumph was found in the person of Jesus!